

Chapter 7 Local Coastal Program Amendments

In cases where proposed development is inconsistent with an applicable local coastal program (LCP), the Coastal Act allows agencies authorized to undertake a public works project to request an LCP amendment to ensure consistency. The need for project-specific LCP amendments often arises when projects cannot meet policy requirements or development standards included in an LCP, such as permitted use limitations or setback standards for wetlands, environmentally sensitive habitat areas, and agricultural resources, or where a project creates a land use designation or zoning conflict. The Department may request traditional LCP amendments, but they must be initiated, written, and processed by the local government through both the local and California Coastal Commission (CCC) LCP review process. The exception to this procedure is an LCP amendment request made by an entity authorized to undertake a public works project, such as the Department, that is intended to meet public needs beyond the LCP area, and the project was not anticipated when the LCP was initially certified. In these cases, the local government may amend its LCP to accommodate the project according to traditional LCP procedures, or the requesting entity can petition the CCC to consider the amendment. The CCC, after a public hearing and after the local government explains its action, may certify the LCP amendment if it can make several specific findings regarding balancing of effects and public welfare.

LCP amendment requests must undergo application completeness review similar to permit applications but are subject to different timelines for CCC staff response and filing requirements. Refer to the [CCC Processing Timeline Summary](#).

Many local jurisdictions will conduct environmental review as part of any LCP amendment application, and some certified LCP implementing ordinances require that environmental review be conducted. However, Section 21080.5 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exempts local governments from requiring preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in connection with preparing LCPs. Rather, CEQA compliance responsibilities are assigned to the CCC's LCP review and approval process, which has been found by the Secretary of the Resources Agency to be functionally equivalent to the EIR process. As an agency with a certified regulatory program under CEQA Section 21080.5, the CCC must consider alternatives and avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures that would substantially lessen any significant adverse environmental effects that a proposed project under its jurisdiction would have on the environment. This does not exempt a particular project from CEQA review; it only exempts the CCC from CEQA review for its actions.

7.1 Coastal Land Use Plan Amendment

Where a project necessitates an amendment to a certified LCP to incorporate map changes or revisions to land use designations or policies, the standard of review for the changes is the Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act. A land use plan amendment must be scheduled for CCC hearing and action within 90 days of the date of the application completeness determination; however, the CCC may grant a 1-year time extension for CCC review and action.

7.2 Coastal Implementation Plan Amendment

Where a project necessitates an amendment to a certified zoning ordinance (implementation plan), the standard of review for proposed changes to the implementation plan of a certified LCP (i.e., zoning map, zoning designation, and development standard amendments) is that the proposed amendment conforms with and is adequate to implement provisions of, the land use plan element of the LCP. Implementation plan amendments must be scheduled for CCC hearing and action within 60 days of the application completeness determination; however, the CCC may grant a 1-year time extension for CCC review and action. In addition, if an implementation plan amendment is submitted concurrent with a land use plan amendment, the time period for CCC review is determined according to the timelines required for the land use plan amendment.